

Remarks of U.S. Ambassador Richard Olson
Visit to Tarbela Dam
March 5, 2013

Chairman Shah, distinguished guests, media colleagues, Assalamu Alaikum.

It is my pleasure to visit Tarbela Dam today. As you may recall, the United States helped to build Tarbela in the 1970's. Over the past 38 years, the dam, one of the largest earthen dams in the world, has faithfully served the people of Pakistan by storing water for irrigation, providing flood control, and, of course, generating electric power.

Today, I am pleased to join Chairman Shah to celebrate another milestone in our assistance to Pakistan's hydropower dams: the renovation of three generators for the Tarbela power-plant, which restores nearly 130 megawatts of power generation to the national grid. Thank you for the excellent cooperation over the years.

The work completed here at Tarbela contributes enough electricity to supply two million customers, and helps provide relief to those suffering from extensive power shortages.

We understand that Pakistan needs electricity and we are committed to helping. Hydropower is one of the most efficient sources of power, and these upgraded generators will increase power generation capacity and ensure the long-term self-sufficiency of the power sector. Our assistance addresses both of these priorities.

For the long-term, we support Pakistan's efforts to increase the efficient use of energy and reform the energy sector to improve its solvency. Taken together, this will help Pakistan meet the needs of its growing population and economy.

To provide immediate relief to energy shortages, we are working with Pakistan to complete a series of high impact projects. In addition to Tarbela, these high impact projects include the renovation of thermal plants at Jamshoro, Guddu, and Muzaffargarh, which have already added over 650 megawatts since October 2009. The U.S. government is also co-financing the completion of the Gomal Zam and Satpara dams which will add another 35 megawatts and irrigate more than 200,000 acres.

Finally, we are helping to replace thousands of highly inefficient agricultural and municipal water pumps throughout the country to save additional megawatts. The entire USAID energy portfolio will add 900 megawatts by the end of this year and help decrease power shortages in Pakistan.

The addition of 900 megawatts means that thousands of businesses throughout the country will be able to increase their productivity and revenues, as well as employ more people. Millions of Pakistanis will experience fewer power outages and enjoy a better quality of life. The economy will benefit, contributing to a stronger, more stable, and more prosperous future for Pakistan.

But we must remember that the solution to Pakistan's energy problems will take more than just construction of a few power plants or dams. Reforms in the energy sector will be critical so the people of Pakistan can fully benefit from the investments that are being made.

The United States is supporting critical policy reform work by the Government of Pakistan to increase revenues and collections, reduce distribution inefficiencies, implement the 2012 Petroleum Policy, improve the regulatory framework, and improve accountability and oversight.

A stable, continuous energy supply is critical to Pakistan's prosperity. Today, I am pleased to witness how our joint efforts are yielding results. I am confident that this will be only one in a long series of achievements in Pakistan's energy sector.

Thank you, Chairman Shah, for inviting us here today. I look forward to hearing about future progress on our joint efforts.